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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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report

describing conditions on a

TKZS farm near Oresh, Svishtov Okoliya.

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DATA ON BULGARIAN KOLKHOZES, BELENE PRISON CAMP

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CHANGES IN KOLKHOZESManagers and Subordinates

A situation hitherto unknown has been developing in Bulgarian farm areas. The peasants who did not work before the advent of Communism still do not work, but give orders to those who fed them in the past. The number of supervisory personnel increased from year to year and a chaotic situation ensued. Thus, for example, when the chairman of the Oresh kolkhoz assigned a team of workers to a plowing job, an hour later the agronomist would order them to stop plowing because "conditions were not propitious," or when the agronomist issued orders to begin the fodder harvest, the administrative director would assign them to another task.

Finally, the management came up with a new formula, "to allow complete initiative," permitting everyone to do anything he liked, provided he did something. This new method made the task of the managers easier, while the peasants, too, were content, for they were left "to work in peace."

The rural management class, composed of Communist Party members and agricultural experts, was the only group likely to lose its position as a result of malversations and incompetence. Consequently, the members of this group protected each other, for malversations and incompetence were a general phenomenon. Those in positions of responsibility in the kolkhozes defrauded and robbed both the cooperatives and the state. There was no possibility of

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discovering violations of this sort because those involved were bound together by party, family, and friendship ties. Without this mutual protection, the entire group would have suffered. Kolkhoz and town managers also were closely bound and formed a close-knit group.

The kolkhoz authorities annually concealed thousands of kilograms of wheat and other products, which they did not account for in the harvest statistics. Subsequently, the kolkhoz and town council authorities sold the stolen products on the "free market" and shared the proceeds among themselves.

The town Communists looked down their noses at the others and did not let them forget that they were in a privileged position, with the result that the rural Communists were disillusioned and lost confidence in Communism. The peasants were happy because the Communists "left them in peace" and the "class struggle" was suspended, temporarily or perhaps forever, since all the collectivized peasants (kolkhozniki) and the non-collectivized peasants (kulaks) were poor and exploited. The Communists looked upon the peasants not as members of their own class but as a mass of workers to be continually "mobilized" and organized by the "vanguard of the working class," i.e., by them [the Communists]. The Communists refrained from becoming friendly with the peasants. They had their own group and did everything as a group.

Communist officials arrived from the big cities inspired by a sense of mission and as saviors, but upon discovering the true situation, which was different from that depicted to them by official propaganda, they either ran back to where they had come from or became accomplices of the local Communists.

Lately, the Communists have discontinued political indoctrination among the peasants. There is no longer any Otechestven Front organization in Oresh; if there is one, only the Communist authorities know it. No public political

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function or mass meetings have been organized during the past year. The local Communists have been unable to reach agreement among themselves even when their own group met, since many of them were not in agreement with the party line. They would go to the local state-operated public-house to show their own comrades that they had the time to attend the meeting but did not wish to do so.

Communist Party enrollment in Oresh is practiced on a "family" basis; enrollment is open only persons belong to the five "traditionally" Communist families, i.e., those families which already include one or two party members. The town and the kolkhoz are administered by these five families and some "arrivals."

Replacement of Landowners

In the pre-collectivization period, Oresh had six families which owned over 50 hectares of land each and gave their holdings on a "share-crop" basis to small landowners and landless peasants. The government rented out state-owned land, but on a different basis; the rent was determined at public auction. The peasants were not eager to rent state-owned land, even at equal rates, since they would be penalized in case of a poor crop or damaged due to natural causes. Even before the advent of the Communist regime, this caused the government to distribute state-owned lands among landless peasants and small landowners, even at low rental rates, since the state had good reason for not allowing such lands to remain uncultivated.

The Communist regime did not find any landless peasants at Oresh, but a special type of cooperative composed of small landowner-peasants, who had received state-owned land, had collectivized themselves with the large landowners, and did not need any implements to work their land. After the nationalization of large land holdings and farm equipment in 1948, such associations as the one at Oresh broke up, and the small landowners no longer had their own equipment and livestock. It was proposed to them that they join a Communist kolkhoz.

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Now, after 12 years, the Bulgarian Communists have returned to the point from which they started. Land at Oresh is being rented to its former owners on a "share-crop" basis through collective, family, and individual agreements.

Collective, Family, and Individual Agreements

Under the new system, the Communist bosses not only require the peasants to deliver half their production, but also to pay taxes on the land. Thus, there has come about complete decollectivization of the work and total concentration of production in the hands of the new Communist bourgeoisie. The new method was welcomed by the Oresh kolkhoz leaders, who now no longer have any production worries. Each "agreement" stimulates individual initiative and causes production to increase.

Now the peasants go to work willingly, not because their interest is greater, as the Communists claim, but because the new method has eliminated their supervisors, who used to be the worst evil from the peasants' point of view. Now the kolkhoz management exercises control through a system of "inspection."

The new system of work and payment had not improved kolkhoz life. Divergences, scandals and quarrels still exist, since every kolkhoznik wants that part of the field which will give him the best results with the least work. The Oresh peasants have made paradoxical proposals, i.e., to take possession "by agreement" of the land to be cultivated. This may be expected to come about in the future and will be the last stage in the metamorphosis of the kolkhozes in Bulgaria.

No one bothered to apply the "collective agricultural economy statute" since the party gave the kolkhoz chairmen the right to use full initiative in the administration of the kolkhozes. Using this right, the chairman became de facto owners of the kolkhozes and began to dispose of the land as

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they saw fit. Peasants who were liked by the chairman received the most fertile plots of land and the right to plant crops which would give the greatest yield. The chairman's relatives were assigned to administrative posts.

"Individual" and "family" agreements were not successful in the Svishtov region during the fall harvest. It was ordered that the wheat sheaves in each plot covered by agreements be piled up separately and that the wheat be weighed and warehoused separately. Then the delivery conditions were dictated. The amounts to be delivered were excessive, and it was necessary for the militia to intervene.

In many kolkhozes in the Sevlie region, thousands of tons of wheat were lost, because it was left in the open pending settlement of the question of delivery and of the amounts to be paid to the peasants concerned.

Work and work compensation under the "agreement" system resulted in a record harvest in the Oresh area. The wheat crop although damaged by spring frost, yielded 2,800 kilograms per hectare, while the barley yield was 3,120 tons per hectare, and the oat yield 2,600. Of the total harvest, two-fifths was to be delivered to the government, two-fifths was to be distributed among the members of the cooperative, and the remainder was to be used as seed and to be sold on the "free market." Actually, things turned out quite differently, as the kolkhoz leaders again had concealed considerable quantities of wheat, rye, oats and barley by using their own children to weigh and record the crops, while the state controllers in the area were being entertained by the kolkhoz leaders' wives. There was also talk of how the leaders and individual "agreement" peasants agreed to have the latter hide part of the harvest, to be divided between them later.

Prior to collectivization, spring wheat was harvested in the Svishtov region by 30 October at the latest, and fall planting was done soon afterwards. This wheat, in turn, was reaped by 20 July and threshing was completed one month later. This year, the Svishtov kolkhozniki completed

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the reaping on 20 August, while the threshing took until the end of September.

Struggle for Higher Pay

Last year the Oresh farm region ranked second in the Svishtov district with regard to payment in kind and cash for one day's work: 2,200 grams of wheat, 800 grams of corn, 600 grams of other grains, and 7.40 leva. The accounting system and the daily norms were radically changed in order to increase compensation for a day's work, which was to be 20 leva under the plan. Many production operations were merged in order to treble the "norm" and to secure the required amount of 20 leva. This practice had already been employed at some southern Bulgarian kolkhozes since last year.

All of this made good propaganda, but actually the situation in the kolkhozes has not changed at all. Prior to this system of unified compensation, a peasant was expected to till about 700 square meters of land planted to corn; now that figure is 2,000 square meters. Thus, now fewer days of work are registered. The total net annual income is divided by the number of work days and the resulting figure is three times larger than the figure for last year, since the number of work days is now three times less than it was last year. Moreover, peasants who have distinguished themselves in their work no longer receive any compensation for idle day, as was the case before. The leaders justify the new practice of increasing daily compensation through increased work quotas on the grounds that large statistical figures are thus eliminated, resulting in easier bookkeeping. The change in work quotas was also facilitated by the introduction of "agreements," as a result of which the peasant is no longer interested in the number of work days to be credited to him but in the percentage of output which he will obtain from the plot of land worked by him.

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In order to increase cash payments to the peasants, the Oresh kolkhoz in the future will give its members only wheat and corn as payment in kind, and will sell all other products on the "free market" after making the necessary deliveries to the government.

Only administrative employees, if they do not have the minimum amount of land provided for outside the kolkhoz, may draw such items as meat, cheese, milk and fruit as payment in kind for their work. The members of the cooperative have decided to buy all such items on the free market. Thus, peasants who work in the fruit orchard will purchase fruit on the free market. This has resulted in an increase in cases of petty thievery, which have gradually become legal. Those working in the vineyard of the kolkhoz regularly pilfer a few kilograms of grapes "to bring home to the children," and the kolkhoz management condones their action. In addition, there are cases of thievery committed collectively, in which whole worker squads and their leaders participate; the proceeds are subsequently divided "collectively."

PRISON CAMP FOR ANTI-PARTY COMMUNISTS

NEAR BELENE ISLAND

A new prison camp was set up in the spring of this year on a 20,000-square meter island located in the immediate vicinity of Belene Island (Persin) on the Danube. The camp was built by convicts held in detention on the island. In early June, the camp was occupied by convicts who arrived in two trains and lived in improvised wooden huts covered with leaves and earth. The convicts cut timber for the "Drvodobiv" state lumber enterprise of Sevlievo. In addition to the prisoners, there also worked civilians from towns in the Svishtov area, principally from Belene and Oresh.

Since the prisoners were not under very severe discipline, they were allowed to have contact with those workers.

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Most of the prisoners were well-known Communists, although there were also a few anti-Communists. About mid-July, there were about 600 prisoners; in early August, however, some of them were either released or transferred to other camps. According to the civilian workers there, the prisoners included deputy ministers, generals, colonels, professors, enterprise managers, etc.

At the camp there were also three women who worked in the kitchen. Lately, a fourth woman, allegedly a doctor, was there to act as nurse for the workers.

It was alleged that the prisoners included the following personalities: General Panchevski, General Grekov, General Panov, General Slavcho Tr'nski, General Znepolski, Georgi Chankov, ^uCola Dragoicheva, Dobri Tarpechev, Professor Kr'stinov, and Pelovski.

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